DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 260 CE 053 077

AUTHOR	Eadie, Douglas C.
TITLE	Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs. Employment and Training Issues.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Counties, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jan 88
GRANT	99-1272-003-02
NOTE	27p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Services; *County Officials; Job Placement; *Job Training; *Labor Force Development; *Local Government; Program Administration; *Public Administration; Vocational Education; Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Job Training Partnership Act 1982; Private Industry Councils; Service Delivery Areas; *Strategic Issues Management

ABSTRACT

Intended to teach local elected officials (LEOs) how to increase their involvement in job training and other human resource programs, this document argues that elected county officials can use strategic issues management (SIM) to assert stronger leadership and to use Private Industry Councils (PICs) more fully as a resource for the delivery of human services. Following an executive summary and introduction, the second section provides an overview of SIM, including how to move from strategic planning to strategic management, issue identification and selection, management of implementation, and the design of strategic management. The third section describes the job training environment for local governments. The fourth section outlines the major steps in strategic agenda-building, what constitutes SIM, the detailed design for a partnership between LEOs and PICs, and how to identify and select issues. The fifth section deals with formulating strategies to address the strategic issues identified and how to manage their implementation. That section also discusses the importance of a continuing issue identification/strategy formulation and implementation process; the impact of multicounty/multi-LEO situations on the process; and the ties of SIM to LEO and PIC annual and biennial planning and budgeting processes. The document concludes with a list of steps in the SIM process and a 16-item bibliography. (CML)

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Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

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The National Association of Counties
January 1988

This report was prepared under a grant from the United States Department of Labor
#99-1272-003-02

Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

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Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

Preface

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is pleased to publish this Issue Paper entitled "Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs." We, at the National Association of Counties, are aware of the various roles which local elected officials and private industry council members play in the Job Training Partnership Act and other job training program operations. We believe that local elected officials and private industry council members play very important roles in the operations of your programs. The purpose of this paper is to provide you with strategies by which to increase local elected official involvement in job training and other human resource programs while increasing the visibility and strength of local private industry councils.

This paper was sponsored by NACo's Training and Employment Programs, under a grant from the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. This paper does not reflect, necessarily the views or opinions of the Department of Labor. It does reflect, however, the views of NACo and its author Douglas C. Eadie.

This paper is meant to stimulate discussion and debate within the training and employment community. We appreciate your comments. Please address your comments to Neil E. Bomberg, Research Associate and Editor, Issue Papers Series, National Association of Counties, 440 First Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

Executive Summary

County governments, always responsible for a number of important if unexciting activities, currently are being afforded the opportunity to provide strong, innovative local leadership. An important resource for Local Elected Officials (LEOs) is the job training system and the public and private sector representatives who sit on Private Industry Councils (PICs). Unfortunately, LEOs underutilize the job training system and their local private industry councils.

The relatively low priority given to the LEO-PIC partnership may result, in part, from LEO underestimation of the political benefits that a strong partnership can generate. The basic thesis of this monograph is that county LEOs can assert stronger strategic leadership in the training arena and can utilize the PIC more fully as a resource for the delivery of human services.

Strategic planning provides the mechanism by which to implement the LEO-PIC partnership. Strategic planning is a powerful mechanism by which to establish and maintain a balance between an organization and its external environment. The term strategic management describes a process that encompasses strategic planning but goes beyond it. It reflects the practical lessons that have been learned over the past few years as strategic planning applications are tested in the public and private sectors. Strategic issue management is an important variation, of which the primary outcome is a highly selective and dynamic change agenda for the planning organization.

The issue identification and selection phase of the process begins with a scan of the organization's environment. The point of the scan is to identify significant opportunities and problems that appear to demand organizational attention. Strategic issue selection is an opportunity for county LEOs to engage in serious policy making, in contrast with the perfunctory review of formal finished planning documents that are often called policy making. The strategy formulation process involves, first, getting a detailed handle on an issue, breaking it down into various sub-issues, and then examining the possible change targets and implementation strategies that might be adopted.

Time and attention are required to manage the strategic change agenda. It should be a high priority matter. A critical step in the design process is the assessment of a county's capability to make effective use of strategic issue management techniques. The more positive and sophisticated an organization's experience with planning, the better prepared it will be to utilize strategic issue management techniques.

Job training is both a strategic issue to county LEOs and an ideal candidate for the application of strategic issue management techniques. Private industry councils are a vehicle by which LEOs can develop large system building activities. Unfortunately, PICs rarely are used in this manner. Without strong front-end LEO commitment to the partnership in strategic agenda building with the local PIC, the PIC's full potential as a strategic planning vehicle is far less likely to be realized.

Reaching a firm commitment to take a strategic issue management approach in the training area is likely to require that LEOs understand the general features of the training environment, the strategic issue management process, the benefits associated with a LEO-PIC partnership, the nature of the LEO-PIC partnership and formulate a strategy for building the partnership.

Developing the detailed strategic issue management design requires the development of a shared LEO-PIC vision of the local training system, a set of desired outcomes and a workplan setting forth a schedule of events and activities. These include issue identification and selection. Once established, the LEO must manage the strategic agenda. This can be done by formulating strategies in which to address issues and manage implementation.

The outcome is a job training system which addresses the goals and objectives of the LEO, the PIC, and of the community in which it operates.

Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Time of Opportunity and Challenge

Long seen as a kind of "sleeping giant" in the federal system - a creature of the states responsible for a number of important but unexciting local functions - county government is entering a new era. In the context of the devolution of national government responsibilities, the continuing decline of central city populations, and the growing recognition that local problems transcend municipal boundaries, counties are being presented with the opportunity - and challenge - to provide strong, innovative leadership at the local level.

B. Upgrading Strategic Management

Successfully meeting the leadership challenge will require that county Local Elected Officials (LEOs) move aggressively to upgrade both the strategic and operational capabilities of county government. Through strategic management, LEOs can ensure that the mission, strategies, and programs of county government are in balance with their environment and that they make the fullest feasible use of precious resources in responding to environmental change.

The Training Resource

Several programs comprising the employment and training "system" are among the most important resources available to LEOs in dealing with their complex, dynamic local environment. There is growing evidence that job training can be a powerful tool for strengthening local economies, contributing significantly to the expansion of businesses and jobs, and to the reduction of unemployment.

Despite its rich promise, however, there is widespread underutilization of the training resource by county government, for a number of reasons. Perhaps the highest barrier to realizing its promise is the absence of a system in the strict sense of the word. The employment and training arena is populated by several programs run by a number of independent organizations which are funded through a variety of federal, state and local conduits. It is difficult enough to understand, much less to use systematically.

Two other important barriers are the failure to recognize the potential of the training resource and the concomitant absence of explicit strategies to make full use of it.

D. PICs as Allies

County LEOs committed to the fuller utilization of local training programs in their economic and human resource development efforts have a potentially strong ally in the Private Industry Councils (PICs) that has been established through the Job Training Partnership Act. PICs are representative not only of the employment and training community, but also the business sector, which is legislatively mandated to play a strong PIC leadership role. Although their strict legislative charge is to oversee the local JTPA program, PICs are encouraged to play a broader comprehensive planning role, which in light of their representative membership, they are ideally suited to play.

If training programs tend to be an underutilized county government resource, so do PICs. Rather than serving as a valuable ally to county LEOs and as a vehicle for the realization of LEO priorities and goals in the training area, many, if not most, PICs function outside of the LEO strategic sphere.

E. The Political Dimension

The relatively low priority accorded the LEO-PIC partnership may result in part from LEO underestimation of the political benefits that a strong partnership can generate for LEOs. More effective utilization of training resources in forwarding economic development strategies can, for example, generate political capital, as can the more effective

coordination of training resources in the community. Of course, public recognition depends on a systematic public information program that clearly communicates the benefits realized from the LEO-PIC partnership.

E. Objectives and Content

This monograph is principally intended to provide county LEOs with practical, detailed guidance in fashioning strategies to make the LEO-PIC partnership more effective and to ensure that the PIC's potential as a "strategic right arm" for LEOs in the training arena is more fully realized. Although the target audience also includes PIC members and employment and training administrators, the preeminent focus is county government and the capability of LEOs to provide strategic leadership in the training arena.

NACo's May 1987 monograph by Steven G. Pines, "Job Training Partnership Programs: A Guide For Local Elected Officials", provides an excellent orientation on JTPA and the formal, legislatively mandated planning and management roles and responsibilities of LEOs in the local JTPA program. In order for LEOs to make full use of PICs as a county resource, however, they must engage in a strategy formulation process that transcends JTPA formal planning channels. Otherwise, there is a danger that LEO involvement will be "driven" by a JTPA paper flow that is generally unconnected from LEO strategy. How to go about fashioning and managing this "umbrella" strategy is the focus of this companion piece to Mr. Pines' monograph.

This monograph recognizes that in only a very few communities can LEOs and PICs start with a clean slate in partnership building. In the great majority of cases, the proverbial train is well down the track; complex working relationships reflecting local circumstances have grown up over time. Although this history is a very real constraint in partnership building, a basic thesis of this monograph is that county LEOs can assert stronger strategic leadership in the training arena and can utilize the PIC more fully as a resource at any point in local training system development. Success, however, depends on, first, LEO's according priority attention to the matter, and second, LEOs fashioning detailed strategies to exercise leadership. These sections follow this introduction:

*Section 2 provides the reader with a general orientation on the logic and techniques of strategic management, with special attention to a particular application of the logic: strategic issue management;

*Section 3 describes the employment and training environment briefly and examines the barriers to LEO strategic leadership;

*Section 4 provides detailed guidance on developing the LEO strateigc agenda vis-a-vis the PIC; and

*Section 5 discusses how LEOs can go about managing implementation of the agenda.

II. STRATEGIC ISSUE MANAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

A. From Strategic Planning to Strategic Management

Strategic planning is a powerful logic for establishing and maintaining a balance between an organization and its external environment. The point is to ensure that the organization's resources are put to the best feasible use in capitalizing on opportunities and dealing with threats. Traditional long-range planning, which assumes environmental stability and hence involves the projection of the present into the future, is obviously a highly unreliable tool in times of rapid environmental change.

The general strategic planning logic can be applied in as many ways as there are organizations, and strategies come in all shapes and sizes. To name a few of the more prominent applications, many local governments have used the logic to produce broad visions of the community of the future; others have produced more detailed departmental strategic plans; and others have addressed specific strategic issues.

1. Practical Lessons

The term "strategic management" is increasingly used to describe a process that encompasses strategic planning, but goes beyond it. It reflects the practical lessons that have been learned over the past few years as strategic planning applications have been tested in both the public and private sectors. Among the more important lessons are:

*The danger that the trappings of planning can overwhelm the substance, and particularly that the generation of elaborate planning documentation (of the ten-pound, five-year master plan variety) can detract from the need for action now to address strategic issues.

*The recognition that effective strategic planning is a people-intensive process, and that successful strategy formulation depends as much on the development of an organization's human resource as it does on the methodology and mechanics of the planning process. Indeed, strategic planning has been described as, in essence, "the right people, around the right table, for the right amount of time, applying the right methodology to the right information".

*The recognition that in a volatile environment very little can be projected very far into the future and that, accordingly, a strategically effective organization will be capable of responding to change as it occurs. It will avoid attempting to predict the inherently unpredictable future and thus avoid a dangerous illusion of control.

*The recognition that the strategic planning logic must be tailored to an organization's unique needs and circumstances, and that, therefore, the design function is critical to successful strategic planning.

2. Strategic Issue Management

Strategic issue management is an important variation on the broader strategic management theme, the primary outcome of which is a highly selective and dynamic change agenda for the planning organization. This "management by selection" approach holds particular promise for LEOs because of its practicality and affordability. Rather than dealing with the whole range of organizational activities in a comprehensive plan, in creating this change agenda an organization selects certain important issues for special attention above and beyond its day-to-day work. The strategic issue management process involves three basic steps: (1) identifying and selecting strategic issues based on a thorough analysis of the external environment; (3) formulating strategies to address the issues; and (4) managing implementation of the strategies.

B. Issue Identification and Selection

1. Environmental Scan

The issue identification and selection phase of the process begins with a scan of the environment around the organization. The point is to collect and analyze information that is pertinent to the mission and functions of the planning organization - economic, demographic, physical, social/cultural, political, and technological. For example, in the economic and human resource development area, LEOs need to know, among other items, the current mix of businesses and job types, changes in the mix over

time and the trends that can be identified, reasons for the changes, the related human resource development needs, and the like. It is important to keep in mind that a complete environmental scan will also include the programs and activities of other organizations in the community that are pertinent to the work of the planning organization. For example, county government LEOs, for purposes of their strategic planning, must know what other units of government are doing in economic development as well as the directions that development is taking.

2. Strategic Issues

The point of the scan is to identify significant opportunities and problems that appear to demand organizational attention. These strategic issues can be thought of as fundamental questions about the current strategies of the planning organization. Obviously not all issues are equally important to an organization, and selectivity is essential in building the strategic change agenda. A rough and ready guideline has worked well in practice: A strategic issue is a problem or opportunity which, if action is not taken on it now, is likely to saddle the organization with unacceptable future costs. Costs should be estimated broadly to include not only direct costs such as out-of-pocket payments and political damage but also the less direct loss of potential benefits such as revenue generation.

To take a practical example, in the economic and human resource development arena, a county may identify the long-run decline of a particular industry as a strategic issue demanding attention now. On the opportunity side, the opportunity to develop a stronger entrepreneurial sector in the county may be selected as a strategic issue. The absence of training programs focusing explicitly on entrepreneurial skills might be a related strategic issue.

3. Crosscutting Nature of Many Issues

It should be kept in mind that the county's annual budget preparation process - while it can be made more issue-oriented - cannot, alone, handle all strategic issues with which LEOs must deal. The reason is that many of the most important issues will not fit within departments and cannot be captured in budget units; they will, therefore, not emerge from the departmental planning and budget preparation process. These complex crosscutting issues tend to fall through the proverbial "cracks", catching LEOs off guard and often causing significant damage, including the erosion of credibility.

These crosscutting issues are not always within the exclusive purview of county government, even though they must be understood by LEOs and, to the extent feasible, managed by them. One of the most often governed by independent elected boards, these systems have a tremendous impact on the quality of life in a county, and hence on its economic development. Therefore, LEOs cannot ignore the issue. The training arena offers a number of crosscutting issues which PICs might assist LEOs in addressing, including displaced workers, youth employment, adult basic education, the training-welfare connection, and customized training for business.

4. Issue Identification and Selection

Strategic issue selection is an opportunity for county LEOs to engage in serious policy making, as contrasted with the perfunctory review of formal, finished planning documents that is often called policy making, or the nit- picking review of budget line items that manage to miss all important policy implications. The opportunity comes at a cost, however - time. In a complex environment, no matter how comprehensive and well-presented the environmental scan, the identification, rank-ordering, and selection of the issues that will comprise the strategic agenda can require a full day or two of intensive LEO deliberation. Otherwise, the full implications, including costs, for county government cannot be adequately assessed.

5. Strategy Formulation

The strategy formulation process involves, first, getting a detailed "handle" on an issue, breaking it down into the various sub-issues, and then examining the possible change targets (strategic objectives) and implementation strategies that might be adopted to address the issue. A rough kind of cost logic is employed in strategy formulation to ensure that the ultimate targets and implementation strategies provide the best feasible balance of costs and benefits for the county in dealing with the issue. For example, the staff task force involved in addressing the issue of entrepreneurial development may consider and then abandon the option of establishing a new county division dedicated to entrepreneurial development because of the political and financial cost. However, it may recommend hiring a reasonably well-paid coordinator within the development department, one of whose primary responsibilities will be to secure training and other grants to promote entrepreneurialism.

The strategic change agenda which results from the strategic issue management process consists of a number of strategic change targets, each associated with an implementation strategy, attached to the strategic issues that have been selected. This agenda is dynamic, in the sense that it will change over time as strategies are implemented and new strategies are formulated to address new issues.

C. Management of Implementation

Time and attention are required to manage the strategic change agenda, but elaborate reporting systems are unlikely to be needed. Following three relatively simple guidelines will help to ensure successful implementation:

*LEOs must treat the strategic agenda as a high-priority matter, deserving their serious attention on a regular basis.

*The strategic agenda should be kept distinct from other organizational management agendas and should be explicitly managed. For example, LEOs might on a monthly basis meet for a couple of hours to review implementation progress. The point is, management of the strategic agenda will not work if it is merely addressed as the nineteenth item at the regular LEO bi-weekly business meeting.

*Each strategic issue and the associated strategies should be assigned to a particular issue manager, accountable for managing the implementation process and reporting progress.

D. A Word on Design

Through the design process, LEOs ensure that the strategic issue management logic is tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of their counties - to the specific outcomes desired and the organizational capability to implement the process. To proceed without a carefully crafted design is to risk failure - whether because the organization has failed to define the objectives clearly or has underestimated the resources required to achieve them.

A critical step in the design process is the assessment of a county's capability to make effective use of strategic issue management techniques. The clearer an organization's sense of the resources that it can bring to the strategic issue management process, and of the constraints within which it must work, the more realistic the design is likely to be.

Organizational capability can be assessed along a number of lines: human resources; organizational planning experience; the managerial infrastructure; and external pressures.

The LEOs themselves represent the most important human resource, and any strategic issue management application must be tailored to their expectations and the priority they give to the process. It is also important to assess the staff support that can be committed to the process, in terms of both skills and time.

The more positive and sophisticated an organization's experience with planning, the better prepared it will be to utilize strategic issue management techniques. If several senior managers have recently been through a planning process widely perceived as unproductive, skepticism at best, cynicism at worst, will constrain the application of strategic issue management. A county whose history includes active LEO leadership and participation in long-range planning will be better prepared to make effective use of strategic issue management techniques than one with a tradition of perfunctory LEO involvement.

The term "managerial infrastructure" describes a county's "bread and butter" administrative and service delivery systems, such as financial management (payroll, accounting, inventory, purchasing) personnel management, contract management, and the like. If there are serious deficiencies in one or more of these basic systems, the cost in time and money to correct them can be a serious constraint on the application of strategic issue management, slowing the pace or deferring the application.

Finally, a county's capability to apply strategic issue management is also affected by external demands on its time and attention, and these demands should be anticipated and factored into the design process. For example, LEOs with a major tax issue on the ballot are likely to be heavily involved in the tax campaign, leaving less time and attention for strategic issue management.

III. THE JOB TRAINING ENVIRONMENT: AN OVERVIEW

A. An Ideal Candidate

Job training is both a strategic issue to county LEOs and an ideal candidate for the application of strategic issue management techniques. Its importance to county economic development is now well documented (See, for example, Chapter II of "Job Training Partnership Programs: A Guide for Local Elected Officials"). It is the kind of issue that cannot be effectively handled by a business-as-usual approach. The training environment is complex and continually changing. It is crowded with organizations and programs, many of which are independent of direct county control. Most of the sub-issues, such as adult basic skills, retraining and youth, cut across these programs and organizations.

B. From a National Policy Perspective

With the widespread recognition these past few years that training is an essential element in any comprehensive economic development strategy, a chorus of voices has called for aggressive federal leadership in fashioning some kind of national "human resource development policy". For example, Governor James Thompson of Illinois has observed that "central to any policy designed to boost the economy - be it at the local, state, or national level - must be ... the training and retraining of our work force". Former Delaware Governor DuPont argued that a "comprehensive national employment policy must reach the same level of priority in the eyes of government as national defense, the maintenance of a sound currency and support of a healthy economy".

The trouble with the term "policy", of course, is that it is one of those vague terms meaning different things to different people. It is often thought of as a single, broad statement of aims or principles intended to guide program implementation and practice. The terms "policy" and "strategy" are in this sense somewhat interchangeable. More often policies are viewed in a narrower sense, as broad rules to guide program implementation and day-to-day management.

In the latter, narrower view, policies abound in the human resource development arena in the various pieces of legislation that fund major training subsystems, such as JTPA and Vocational Education. However, no all-encompassing federal mission and set of integrating strategies have emerged, nor do they appear likely in the foreseeable future. Instead, incremental efforts to tie individual pieces of legislation more closely together will most likely continue to be the thrust at the federal level. These coordinative efforts are by no means trivial. Two of the most important in the recent past are the fashioning of closer linkages between JTPA and the Employment Service and between JTPA and Vocational Education planning.

The implication for county LEOs is obvious. As Nolen M. Ellison, President of Cuyahoga Community College (Cleveland) observed in his address at the annual conference of the American Economic Development Council: "We cannot afford to wait for concerted federal action; nor should we expect to see comprehensive development policies adopted by the national government in the foreseeable future. The challenge will basically be met at the state and local levels by those of us here today and our colleagues throughout the country".

C. Emerging National Themes

Despite the absence of some kind of comprehensive national strategy for human resource development, certain powerful themes have emerged in the past few years in this arena.

*Perhaps the overreaching theme - the basic assumption from which the other themes naturally follow - is that human resource development within the training arena should not, at heart, be a welfare function; rather, it should very directly serve the ends of community economic development. This is to say that training and retraining activities should meet for profit labor market needs and contribute to a growth in private sector employment. This tenet is obviously based in large measure on rejection of employment and training programs of the 1960s and 1970s, which - fairly or not - are widely perceived as having been inefficient and ultimately ineffective in terms of economic development aims.

*Secondly, a large - if not controlling - role for business in training program planning, design, and implementation is seen as essential for program success. Lack of such involvement in the past is

commonly cited as an explanation for the alleged failure of earlier programs.

*Thirdly, while substantially increased public funding for work force training has a significant number of private and public sector proponents, many see as a higher priority the fuller utilization of existing training resources, through two avenues. They are more comprehensive planning and resource allocation, taking into account all major sources of federal, state, and local government funding; and more effective coordination and monitoring of the major training delivery systems, including secondary vocational education programs and two-year community and technical colleges.

D. Traditional Local Fragmentation

As was observed earlier, there is nothing akin to a training system at the local level. Funds flow from several pieces of federal and state legislation that are only tenuously linked philosophically and operationally through a number of intervening bureaucracies to a bewildering variety of local organizations, programs, governance structures, and - ultimately - clients. In addition to JTPA, major actors include secondary vocational education programs, two-year colleges, customized training programs sponsored by states independent of JTPA, and proprietary schools. Far from operating in a complementary and coordinated fashion, programs tend to go their own way and competitiveness is hardly unknown.

The complexity of the local training arena defies easy understanding, much less policy direction. No wonder that LEOs and business volunteers have often thrown up their hands in dismay and turned to more manageable challenges.

E. The PIC Promise

In terms of program content, it would be farfetched to call JTPA a radical departure from its successor, CETA. But the local Private Industry Council is a significant structural reform in the training arena - and a major opportunity for LEOs to exercise stronger strategic oversight. Beyond its bringing business into the mainstream of JTPA planning, resource allocation, and program management and evaluation, the PIC holds great promise as a mechanism for building a better integrated and coordinated local training system that is responsive to LEO leadership.

As Steven Pines' monograph discusses in detail, the formal opportunities for LEOs to exercise JTPA leadership are significant - the appointment of PIC members, the negotiation and approval of an LEO-PIC Partnership Plan, and LEO approval of the local Job Training Plan. However, from experience we already know that such a formal LEO oversight role does not, in and of itself, guarantee that a PIC will fulfill a higher promise than effective and efficient JTPA management - promise of bringing greater rhyme and reason to the whole local training arena.

F. The Hurdles

The barriers to PICs' successfully taking on this larger system building challenge are high, and surmounting them will require both LEOs and PICs go beyond the legally mandated relationship.

1. Lack of Vision

In the first place, there is no clear and legislatively mandated vision of the PIC as a vehicle for local training system building beyond the JTPA program. In the absence of an official vision, it must be locally invented, fleshed out, and implemented - in the face of some formidable barriers, not the least of which is bureaucratic self-interest.

2. PICs Are Not The Ideal Vehicle

PICs themselves are far from ideal mechanisms for system reform. Training providers are represented heavily, and - sad to say - in the history of CETA and JTPA there is ample evidence of what might be called the "division-of-the-spoils" mentality among providers, who have tended to resist reformist zeal successfully. It is also important to keep in mind that heavy business representation alone is not likely to guarantee that enlightened public interest will hold sway on a PIC. Indeed, it is likely that the potential impact of business involvement was exaggerated in the process of creating JTPA.

However strong the organizational and personal commitment to public service, business people work for organizations that do not in any significant way reward them for their public involvement. Therefore, there will in most cases be distinct limits to the pain and suffering that a business person will endure

in seeking training system reform as a PIC member. Also, spending most of their professional lives in a for-profit environment with its different rules of the game, many, if not most, business people have only a superficial understanding of the public realm and little incentive or patience for mastering the intricacies.

If the impact of business involvement on PICs was viewed through rose colored glasses, the importance of LEO leadership was underestimated in getting the JTPA program off the ground. In retrospect, the key to active business participation in building more effective local training systems is LEO leadership. An LEO-articulated vision of the PIC role can call forth strong business commitment to system building, and LEO political influence can move bureaucracies that are quite impervious to business pressure.

Finally, JTPA programs have been in operation for several years, and in many, if not most, localities, the PIC mission does not include the community-wide system building challenge. LEOs interested in using PICs as local training system reform vehicles will thus encounter the inertia of established patterns and expectations.

The foregoing constraints need not add up to an insurmountable barrier for LEOs intending to exercise strong strategic leadership in the training realm. A new LEO-PIC partnership is required to tackle the system building challenge, and the development of this partnership depends on LEOs building and managing the strategic agenda described in the following section.

IV. BUILDING THE STRATEGIC AGENDA

A. Overview

The reader will recall that the basic product of the strategic issue management process is a Strategic Change Agenda consisting of strategic targets/objectives and implementation strategies addressing issues that an organization has identified as strategic. In the process of selecting strategic issues, the planning organization has determined, first, that particular issues cannot be effectively addressed throughout normal planning/management channels and, second, that the future cost of not beginning to deal with the issues now will be unacceptable.

This section describes in detail how county LEOs can go about the process of building a strategic change agenda to address training system issues in partnership with their local Private Industry Council, which can be a major vehicle for strategy formulation. The strategic agenda building process involves the following major steps:

*LEO commitment to apply strategic issue management techniques in addressing training sub-issues and to the PIC partnership;

*Confirmation of the LEO-PIC partnership and adoption of the detailed design for strategy formulation, including roles/responsibilities of LEOs and the PIC; and

*The identification and selection of strategic issues within the training issue area.

B. LEO Commitment

1. Overview

A basic assumption of this monograph is that without strong front-end LEO commitment to the partnership in strategic agenda building with the local PIC, the PIC's full potential as a strategic planning vehicle is far less likely to be realized. Therefore, firming up the LEO commitment is the first major step in the process.

Reaching a firm commitment to take a strategic issue management approach in the training area is likely to require that LEOs devote several hours over the course of one or more work sessions to: (1) understanding the general features of the training environment, including the local JTPA program and the PIC; (2) understanding the strategic issue management process; (3) assessing the possible benefits and costs associated with a LEO-PIC partnership in strategic issue management; (4) agreeing with the PIC on the nature of the partnership; and (5) formulating a strategy for building the partnership with the PIC and moving the strategic issue management process forward.

2. Initiating and Staffing the Commitment Process

What would prompt LEOs even to commence with this first-phase commitment stage of the process? Ideally, the mere act of reading this monograph will create an irresistable urge on the part of LEOs to get cracking with strategic issue management in the training arena. In the real world, however, many LEOs are unlikely to be carried away by enthusiasm at the thought of spending several hours reaching a commitment to such a process, which at the onset is likely to appear dubious in terms of outcomes, costs, and process.

Realistically, there must be an advocate who will not only secure the preliminary commitment to develop a general game plan, but will also identify the staff resources necessary to support this initial effort. In order for the LEO commitment dialogue to be productive, briefings and other documentation must be prepared, requiring significant staff time. The preferred advocate would, of course, be the Chief Elected Official, but in the real world less direct routes to action are common. Advocacy might come from a particular LEO, from a senior staff member, from a PIC member, an interested business leader, or a prominent actor in the training environment, such as the local community college president, to name only a few possibilities. Even the process of securing LEO agreement to engage in the preliminary commitment dialogue might turn out to be a lengthy and perhaps convoluted effort. For instance, an interested LEO, having read this monograph, might secure the agreement of his or her colleagues to have the county employment and training director prepare the agenda for a work session to consider the application of strategic management in partnership with the PIC, and a lengthy meeting might be required to review the agenda in detail prior to scheduling the preliminary design and commitment work session.

3. Understanding the Training Environment

At the commitment stage of the process, LEOs need understand only the broad features of the local training environment. A highpoint review of the literature documenting the training contribution to economic development might be a useful first step, after which LEOs might study the map of the local training terrain - the major organizational actors and programs, including JTPA, Vocational Education, and the two-year college programs. At this point in the process, Steven Pines' NACo monograph, "Job Training Partnership Programs: A Guide for Local Elected Officials," will serve as an excellent orientation on JTPA.

Within this umbrella of general understanding, LEOs need to hone in on the status of JTPA and PIC development locally. Beyond the formal rules of the JTPA game, LEOs should understand:

*The unique history of the PIC. When it was established, what guidance was provided by LEOs? What LEO vision and expectations were articulated, if any? What formal mission was formulated by the PIC itself, and how has it evolved over time? Has the mission been confined to JTPA program oversight, or has it included extra JTPA strategic planning or system building objectives?

*What has been the nature of the LEO-PIC relationship over time? Has it been close or distant? Have JTPA and the PIC been a high or low priority item to LEOs?

*What is known about the quality of PIC leadership, planning and programming over time? Is there evidence of innovative approaches to addressing issues and to the utilization of resources?

*What planning and operational linkages have there been between JTPA and county economic development programs? What have been the practical results of these linkages? What other linkages with county programs, such as welfare, have been attempted and how productive have they been?

This general assessment of JTPA and the PIC will provide LEOs with a better grasp both of the potential of the PIC as a partner in strategic issue management and of the probable cost involved in building a strong partnership. A PIC with a narrow view of its mission, as limited by the boundaries of conventional JTPA programming, is likely to be less receptive to a more expansive LEO-PIC partnership than a PIC that has been active in addressing community-wide issues transcending JTPA programs. A PIC with relatively weak business leadership and a dominant provider sector is less likely to embrace the LEO partnership initiative than one whose business sector has provided more visionary leadership.

4. Understanding Strategic Issue Management

At the commitment stage of the process, LEOs must also understand the techniques of strategic issue management and how they might apply to the local training scene. What is an environmental scan and how might it be produced? What are examples of training sub-issues and how are they identified? What is a strategy, and how are strategies to address particular sub-issues formulated?

Strategic planning and management is such a complex field that it would be a mistake to assume clear LEO agreement on the potential outcomes, the steps in the process, or the costs of applying the process. For example, the popular notion that strategic planning is basically a kind of cumbersome long-range master planning, with elaborate documentation, might prevent many LEOs from even considering its application in the local training environment.

5. Assessing Benefits and Costs

An understanding of both the local training environment - particularly the nature of the LEO-PIC relationship - and the strategic issue management process will lead naturally to the clear identification of the costs likely to be incurred in moving ahead to build a new LEO-PIC partnership. The fact that more effective management of training sub-issues is likely to result from the new LEO-PIC collaboration may not necessarily outweigh the costs that are likely to be incurred, in LEO time, political capital, and staff support. It is essential at this stage that the likely costs be understood and agreed to, in order to prevent unpleasant LEO surprise and perhaps even withdrawal from the process later.

6. Defining the LEO-PIC Partnership

At this stage in the design process, LEOs will want

to develop a clear set of roles and responsibilities in the strategic issue management process. For each of the major stages of the process, what role is seen for the LEOs and the PIC - in identifying strategic sub-issues, in formulating strategies, in implementing strategies? To what extent do LEOs intend to rely on the PIC to carry out each step of the process and how intensively do LEOs intend to be involved in each step? The question of staff support needs to be addressed at this point, at least generally. The PIC is being challenged to play a broader role, in close alliance with LEOs, and this will place a burden on PIC and SDA staff. To what extent are LEOs committed to enhancing PIC staff support for the strategic issue management effort?

7. Formulating the Partnership Building Strategy

By this time in the LEO commitment phase, a general design will have emerged, consisting of the major elements of a strategic issue management process and the basic features of the LEO-PIC partnership in implementing the process - from an LEO perspective. How to move from this preliminary design to agreement with the PIC on the detailed design is a matter of LEO strategy. The basic question is how to go about conducting a strategic negotiation process with the PIC, or some part thereof, aimed at clarifying outcomes, process, and roles. The details of the strategy will obviously depend on the actual situation - on the cast of characters, the nature of the LEO-PIC relationship, and the history in terms of PIC mission, priorities, and performance. A formal approach, by way of a letter to the PIC chair followed by a high-level meeting, may not work well in a situation where a PIC has maintained an arms length relationship with LEOs and is likely to suspect such a frontal approach, or where a PIC has in the past clearly resisted moving beyond the formal JTPA oversight role.

In the case of a possibly defensive and/or narrowly focused PIC, the LEO courtship should probably be slower and less direct. For example, a series of casual LEO luncheon meetings with PIC officers, or perhaps leading business members, might serve as an effective vehicle for raising in an unthreatening fashion the possibility of a partnership aimed at expanding the PIC role. A series of such casual lunches might lead to a formal LEO-PIC planning session. Or in the alternative, selected PIC members may agree to lobby their PIC colleagues to take the initiative in establishing an LEO-PIC dialogue.

C. Confirmation of Partnership and Detailed Design

1. Setting the Stage

Developing the detailed design is basically a high-level LEO-PIC negotiation process requiring sustained face-to-face deliberations. The product - the design - will consist of a shared vision in terms both of the LEO-PIC partnership and of the PIC role in local training system development; a set of desired outcomes to be tackled by the partnership; a workplan setting forth a schedule of events (such as preparation of the environmental scan) and clearly defining roles and responsibilities.

The people around the table for the purpose of detailed design will depend on the particular local situation. The board of county commissioners might meet with the PIC executive committee, or with an ad hoc PIC committee, for example. Such negotiating work sessions are technically and politically complex, meaning that success will depend heavily on preparation and staging. In such situations, it is advisable for the negotiating parties to agree in advance on the meeting's planned outcomes and the agenda to be followed. The utilization of a professional third-party facilitator who is familiar with strategic management and with the training environment may prove useful. Also, meeting in a comfortable, retreat-like setting well away from the office is a means of signaling that the detailed design will be far less likely. Fundamental, unresolved questions have a way of disrupting detailed planning and even destroying deliberations. Starting at the visionary end of the partnership building spectrum is also valuable as a means to avoid becoming prematurely mired down in the discussion of historical problems. In strategic management, the weakest possible approach is to focus on problems before the opportunities have been identified.

The process of vision clarification is basically a sharing of perceived roles and possibilities, out of which is likely to come a collective raising of the sights that goes beyond the original positions of either party. The educational dimension of the process is critical, since neither the LEOs nor the PIC

representatives may have understood fully each other's views and perceptions prior to the work session.

For example, the PIC representatives at the table may be aware neither of the LEOs' economic development strategies nor of their expectation that the PIC will provide strong support for the strategies. The LEOs may be unaware of some unique internal problems that have heretofore prevented the PIC from becoming more expansive in its view of its role as a local planning and management body.

Agreement on vision must be specific enough to guide the participants through the remainder of the design process without continuing debate on fundamental approaches. For example, the assembled LEO and PIC representatives might agree to the following:

*County economic development strategies and PIC training strategies should be coordinated to the extent feasible, within JTPA regulations.

*The PIC should take on the broader role of tackling training issues that go beyond the strict bounds of JTPA, and that in carrying out this role the PIC will receive both political and financial support from the county LEOs.

*In the process of addressing community-wide training issues, the LEOs will be intensively involved at only two points: (1) in the identification and selection of the issues to be addressed; and (2) in the approval of strategies to be implemented.

2. Determining Outcomes

Reaching specific agreement on the outcomes to be achieved during the first test of the strategic issue management partnership will be critical to success. To move ahead without such agreement is to risk ultimate breakdown when the results fail to satisfy one of the parties. Selecting outcomes involves tailoring possibilities to the realities of the environment - the community ethos and politics, the resources available, and other facets of organizational capability. It is important to keep in mind that outcomes come in many shapes and sizes, and that there is a large middle ground between the extreme poles of doing nothing and solving all problems in one fell swoop.

Outcomes are realistic when the costs have been carefully assessed and the commitment to bear them has been explicitly made. Whether the costs can be borne obviously depends on the resources available - human, financial, political, and technical. Some examples of this tailoring process will help to make the point:

*In one county, the PIC has had a number of operational problems, including rapid turnover in business membership and severe contracting deficiencies. Although the PIC is interested in playing a more expansive role in alliance with the county, it is recognized that during the first year sensible outcomes would be to strengthen business participation on the PIC, after which it might be possible to take on a very limited system-building objective, such as strengthening the operational linkages between county economic development strategies and programs, and JTPA.

*In another county, the PIC is committed to the broader role and has no serious operational problems to impede development of the role. However, in light of the highly competitive and adversarial politics in the county, the PIC will focus its first-year efforts on compiling an inventory of local training resources - dollars, programs, organizations - as the basis of an anticipated second-year strategic issue management effort.

*And in a third situation, the parties have decided that it makes sense for the PIC to manage a full-fledged strategic issue management effort that will formulate strategies to address two or three strategic issues that appear amenable to the strategizing process.

3. Developing the Workplan

Depending on the selected outcomes, the workplan is, very simply, the schedule of events required to achieve them, with the accountabilities clearly assigned. Assuming that the decision is to move forward with an issue management process, the events to be scheduled include: (1) preparation

and review of the environmental scan; (2) identification and selection of issues; and (3) formulation and review of strategies.

At this point, it may not make sense to spell out the strategy formulation process in full detail, since the exact steps are likely to vary with the particular issues that are selected. For example, a particular issue may be so complex in terms of activities and organizational involvement that a two-year strategy formulation process might be required, while in another case six months appear adequate to address an issue.

At the conclusion of this design phase, the test of the LEO-PIC strategic issue management partnership can proceed on the basis of a firm foundation in terms of a shared vision, common objectives, and a mutually agreeable workplan.

D. Issue Identification and Selection

Assuming that county LEOs and the PIC have reached agreement on implementation of a strategic issue management process aimed at managing an agenda of cross-cutting strategic issues, the strategic agenda building process will move through three major stages: (1) development of the information base; (2) identification of strategic issues; and (3) selection of the issues to be addressed in the succeeding strategy formulation phase.

1. Information Base

A large part of the strategic management "battle" has been won with the development of a thorough scan of the training environment, on the basis of which issues can be identified and selected. It makes good sense to assemble a staff task force that is accountable for identifying, collecting, analyzing and presenting pertinent environmental information. A considerable data base describing economic and human resource development trends and conditions will be readily available from local government economic development plans, and from the training plans of the PIC and other local organizations, such as vocational education districts and two-year colleges.

However, critical information on the resource side of the fence is likely to be much more difficult to find. One of the principal interim products of the strategic management process is likely to be a detailed inventory of training resources, consisting of the description of each major local training program in terms of:

*Legislative provisions and state and federal regulations;
*Administrative and governance mechanisms
*Funding sources and amounts;
*Program objectives and technical approaches;
*Program performance; and
*Linkages with other programs and organizations.

Identifying and collecting the pertinent information are only part of the development of an effective environmental scan; equally important is presentation of the information to policy makers. A common complaint of LEOs and other policy makers such as PIC members is the failure of staff to present information in such a fashion as to facilitate policy formulation. All too often, bloated planning documents that only a masochist would enjoy wading through are transmitted to policy makers on the assumption that the pain and suffering involved in sorting out the significant points and implications are the normal lot of the policy maker.

A more effective approach is for the staff task force to invest heavily in designing effective presentation formats. Indeed, it might make sense to require that the briefing be presented to the extent feasible in graphical format, making creative use of pie, bar, and line charts and graphs, and that where narrative is required, bulleted points be used and excess verbiage be avoided. The point is to communicate effectively, causing a minimum of pain for policy makers - not to demonstrate the complexity of the material.

In order to ensure that the environmental briefing is as effective as possible under the circumstances, the staff task force may want to test the presentation with other staff in one or more work sessions. The purpose of these work sessions is to review the first and successive versions of the briefing in detail, critiqueing the effectiveness of the graphics, questioning the meaning of information, and "teasing out" implications. To be effective, these review sessions must involve active, candid, and creative dialogue, the antithesis of formal "show 'n tell" meetings.

Such elaborate preparation need not threaten spontaneity or creativity on the part of policy makers. On the contrary, the better prepared the presentation, the more likely that the policy makers' deliberations will be creative and productive in strategic terms.

2. Issue Identification

The staging of the issue identification work session is critical to its effectiveness. The following guidelines are based on considerable practical experience:

*Ideally, LEOs and the PIC body accountable for the strategic issue management process will devote at least a full day to review and discuss the environmental scan.

*This strategic work session should, if possible, be held away from the office in a comfortable setting that contributes to creative, open thinking.

*The session should be professionally facilitated. In a complex meeting of this kind, which deviates significantly from the normal day-to-day business of the LEOs and PIC, it is important that someone be responsible for guiding discussion, summarizing points, moving the meeting along when discussion boggs down or becomes counterproductive, and the like.

The participating policy makers may want to add a dash of strategic spice to the work session by inviting one or more external expert resource people to join them in the analysis of the environmental scan and the identification of issues. A cautionary note, however: the more outside involvement, the more complex the dynamics in the session, and the more likely that deliberations will be inhibited. One way of taking advantage of expert resources without jeopardizing the work session climate is to have them work with the staff task force in preparation of the scan, rather than directly with the policy makers at the work session.

Issues are significant questions about the content and management of training programs. They are typically phrased in terms of major opportunities and problems, which appear to require significant change in current programming and/or management processes. Of course, they are at various levels of detail, some requiring the identification of sub-issues before action is possible. Some examples follow:

*The county has developed a program to encourage the growth of entrepreneurship locally, but there is no training component. Evidence from other communities indicates that entrepreneurial development is a powerful economic development strategy. The issue: Should a training strategy be developed and implemented to support the entrepreneurial development strategy?

*Adult basic skills training is clearly an important facet of retraining, which in a county with continuing decline of its traditional industries is a high priority. Basic skills are provided by JTPA directly and by vocational education programs and the community college. The issue: Should an integrated basic skills training strategy be developed to make the most feasible use of existing technology and community resources?

*Minority youth unemployment continues to be an awesome problem that appears to defy solution, despite a number of programs aimed at keeping youth in school and providing training to out-of-school youth. The issue: Should a community-wide, coordinated approach be fashioned to make inroads in this thorny area?

*The state has allocated millions of general revenue dollars to the promotion of higher-tech industrial development, including the establishment of technology development and transfer programs at public universities around the state. The center at the local university is moving full steam ahead, the county has agreed to develop an industrial park for high tech firms, and the projected growth in business and jobs is impressive. The issue: Should a concerted effort be made to train the technicians that will, according to the projections, be required by growing high tech firms in the future?

3. Issue Selection

This last major stage of the strategic agenda building process also requires the intensive involvement of LEOs and PIC members in a work session setting like that described above. It is conceivable that issues can be identified and selected in the same

work session, but a second session is in many cases likely to be necessary in order to allow further staff analysis of issues prior to selection of those that will comprise this year's strategic agenda.

The "short list" of strategic issues that ultimately comprises the strategic agenda will represent a balance between the projected benefits (direct and indirect, as in cost savings) of addressing the issues and the costs that must be incurred in dealing with the issues. Not to assess the costs in detail is to risk violating one of the cardinal rules of effective strategy: manageability.

Since resources are, sad to say, all too finite, the choice to address a particular issue is a choice to have fewer resources to address other issues, and the available resources are soon allocated. As if choosing were not painful enough, the selection process is hardly neat or scientific. The fact is, policy makers must, in the process of choosing, debate priorities and make value judgments, and the more open and intensive the dialogue, the more likely the right choices will be made.

With regard to our hypothetical LEO-PIC strategic issue management process, in a second one-day work session, two of the four identified strategic issues were selected for action during the coming year, and two were deferred for second-year attention:

*The training of entrepreneurs was selected because it appeared to be technically well within reach while also supporting an on-going, high- profile county strategy with a high probability of success, to judge from similar situations in like counties around the country. Adult basic skills coordination also appeared to be a favorable combination of manageability and near-term positive results. Neither issue, it should be noted, involved significant political questions.

*The decision not to move ahead during the next year with the formulation of a comprehensive minority youth strategy was difficult, in light of the seriousness of the problem. However, the technical and political complexity of the issue appeared to outweigh the benefits, at least during the "maiden voyage" of the LEO-PIC partnership. It was also determined that concrete results would be so long in coming that the issue should be tackled only after the partnership had demonstrated its effectiveness and thus gained credibility.

*The staff task force report on the high tech training issue indicated that firms typically preferred to train their own technicians or to utilize customized training programs. In light of a very effective state customized training network, the issue was determined to have too little potential value to merit further attention.

V. MANAGING THE STRATEGIC AGENDA

There are two major elements of strategic agenda management: (1) formulating strategies to address the identified strategic issues; and (2) managing implementation of the strategies. At the conclusion of this last section, three issues related to the LEO-PIC strategic issue management partnership will be briefly discussed: (1) the importance of a continuing issue identification/strategy formulation and implementation process; (2) the impact of multi-county/multi-LEO situations on the strategic issue management process; and (3) the ties of strategic issue management to LEO and PIC annual and biennial planning/budgeting processes.

A. Strategy Formulation

1. Preparing the Task Force

Ad hoc task forces have proved to be an effective vehicle for the formulation of strategy. In the case of the LEO-PIC process, task force membership might include PIC members, PIC and SDA senior staff, and perhaps even important community actors not serving on the PIC. The precise composition obviously depends on the particular issue.

The more meticulous the management of the organizational phase of the task force effort, the higher the probability of success in carrying out the task force charge. This organizational phase involves, in addition to determining the membership, selection of a task force chair, the provision of staff support, orientation and training, and preparation of the task force workplan.

The Chief Elected Official and PIC Chair should, in selecting chairs for each of the strategy formulation task forces, keep in mind the primary characteristics of a successful leader: knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the particular environment around the issue; strong motivational and group process skills; planning and project management capability; the respect and affection of colleagues; and the time - and commitment - to devote to task force leadership. A person who is likely to depend on staff to do the in-depth thinking and to guide task force deliberations will obviously fail to play the chair's role fully. Strength in one area will not necessarily make up for a significant deficiency. For example, no matter how capable a planner and project manager a person may be, he/she will not succeed in task force leadership without the ability to deal in a collaborative fashion with colleagues.

It is essential that adequate staff support be provided to each task force. The support required to ensure full and timely completion of task force responsibilities will be substantial, including research and preparation of materials, maintenance of a record of task force deliberations, preparation of task force reports, and a myriad of administrative details, such as the scheduling of task force meetings.

Not all task force members will be well versed in the techniques of strategic issue management, thus, a formal orientation and training program will be helpful at the onset of the task force effort. Task force members should be introduced to strategic issue management techniques, briefed on the task force charge, and provided with any pertinent background materials, such as the minutes of the meetings at which issues were identified and selected. It would be helpful if, at the organizational meeting, the Chief Elected Official and/or the PIC chair joined the task force to elaborate on his/her charge and shared further thinking about the issue and its context.

It is strongly recommended that each task force set aside the better part of a day for its first meeting, so that in addition to the foregoing orientation activities the task force can develop its workplan. A detailed, realistic workplan is critical to the ultimate success of a task force. The first step in workplan development is the identification and scheduling of key task force events. Once the milestones are in place, the workplan can be fleshed out by adding a schedule of task force meetings, a tentative agenda for each, and the specification of preparatory responsibilities.

Not only does a detailed task force workplan provide members with a useful yardstick with which to measure progress, but it also makes clearer the commitment of task force members' time that will be required to keep the task force workplans should be obtained before task force work moves forward.

2. Identifying Sub-Issues

The first major step in the strategy formulation process around a particular issue is the identification of the sub-issues, based on a detailed, focused second-stage environmental scan. A variety of information collection techniques should be employed to make the scan more useful. For example, beyond standard research, a task force might interview top experts in an issue area, survey the literature to find pertinent cases, and visit other communities that have dealt with the issue, to name a few of the more common techniques.

With regard to the entrepreneurial issue, for example, it would be useful to explore definitions of "entrepreneur" and "entrepreneurship" as a sub-issue. Other sub-issues might include available federal, state, and foundation funding to promote entrepreneurship, how potential entrepreneurs can be located in a community and attracted to a formal training program, factors contributing to the long-term success of entrepreneurial efforts, and the like.

3. Formulating Strategies

The detailed scan and sub-issue analysis provide a context for task force formulation of action strategies to address the issue. As is true of the issue identification phase of the strategic issue management process, there is no science to rely on in formulating strategy. Rather, a rough cost-benefit analysis is used to decide which targets that appear to be feasible technically, financially, and politically - provide the county and PIC with the fullest return on the investment in their implementation.

One of the most important constraints in selecting strategic targets is the resources that are required to implement them. How much can be done, and how fast, obviously depends on the resources available - in staff time, in dollars, in technology, and sometimes even in political capital.

A completed strategy will attach implementation plans to strategic targets. Staying with the entrepreneurial issue, strategic targets might include implementation of a program to attract potential entrepreneurs, implementation of a comprehensive entrepreneurial training program, implementation of a continuing technical assistance effort, and implementation of a long-term research program. Each target will have a detailed workplan, indicating what must happen, who is responsible for making it happen, when it must happen, and how much it will cost.

4. LEO and PIC Involvement

For the LEOs and PIC to take a hands-off approach to the task force process would be needlessly risky. The more complex and ambitious an issue is, the more intensive LEO and PIC involvement should be. Almost certainly, task force work should be reviewed at the completion of major stages, such as sub-issue identification, the identification of targets, and the formulation of tentative strategies. Interim review sessions prior to the final, formal review of finished recommendations can be valuable to clarify further "rules of the game" (for example, cost boundaries and limits to the use of political capital) and to generate other potential targets and strategies. Of course, LEO and PIC interim involvement is an important means to build understanding and commitment along the way, rather than depending on a single "knockdown-dragout" review session.

B. Managing Implementation

Successful implementation of the strategic agenda depends heavily on: (1) a carefully designed implementation process and structure and (2) continuing strong LEO involvement.

1. Process and Structure

It is important that each issue area in which strategies have been developed be assigned to a "Strategy Manager," who is responsible for detailed, day-to-day management of the implementation process and for regular progress reporting to the LEOs and PIC. It may make sense to maintain the original strategy formulation task forces, which can support the task force chairs in carrying out the strategy manager role.

Regular LEO and PIC formal progress reviews can be a useful implementation device. Such reviews, which might be held often in the implementation process and less frequently later, can be an occasion to consider adjustments in strategy in response to environmental change and to resolve major problems.

2. Continuing LEO Involvement

An obvious requirement for successful implementation is the involvement of LEOs and PIC members in the progress review sessions mentioned above. Beyond formal monitoring, there are always points in the implementation process when LEO intervention can be critical. These often require the conscious, visible use of political "clout" to move the process forward. These situations frequently require LEOs to play the facilitator or lead negotiator role.

To take a practical example, the adult basic skills strategy calls for the community college to expand its computer-assisted instruction program, which is a state-of-the-art system highly regarded around the country, and for the inner-city public school system to phase its less sophisticated program out. Despite hours of meetings, the process is not moving forward, and the Chief Elected Official has agreed to chair a planning session including the community college president, the superintendant of schools and their senior staff.

To take another example, the state department of economic development has flexible funds that could be applied to the entrepreneurial training strategy, but in a hightly competitive and resource scarce environment, the LEO's are needed to schedule a meeting with the director, which they will also attend to make clear the high priority they accord the entrepreneurial strategy.

C. Special Issues

1. Creating an On-going Strategic Issue Management Process

The local training environment will continue to change over time; new issues will demand attention, and new resources will be available to address them. In such a context, it makes good sense for the LEO/PIC strategic issue management process to continue beyond the first year. Based on the initial experience, there will be a tested "model" of LEO/PIC partnership that, with updating and refinement, can continue to deal with important training issues that transcend JTPA boundaries.

It would make sense at the conclusion of every annual cycle for the LEOs and PIC leadership to spend a day updating the strategic issue management design for the upcoming cycle, drawing on their experience. Practice makes better, if not perfect, and the participants in the design session will see numerous opportunities to improve the environmental scanning, issue identification and strategy formulation phases in terms of structure and process.

2. Multiple LEO Situations

This monograph is written as if a single body of LEOs works with a particular PIC in the design and implementation of the strategic issue management process. In reality, of course, a single-county SDA will also include city LEOs, and many SDAs consist of more than one county. In situations where more than one set of LEOs must be involved in building the strategic issue management partnership the obvious need is for a single umbrella body representing the LEOs to serve as the lead negotiator with the PIC. Such a body exists in all multi-county SDAs, and so the additional complexity will be relatively minor.

3. Tie to Formal Planning/Budgeting Processes

Both county government and the PIC have formal planning and budget preparation processes that do not necessarily coincide. One of the commonly raised issues in the process of designing strategic issue management applications is how they tie into the existing formal planning processes of the planning organization. Based on experience, the approach most likely to succeed, at least early in the partnership, is not to attempt to tie the two processes closely together. Treat the above-the-line strategic issue management process as a separate, but related, activity that does not have to fit the budget cycle perfectly, but which does need to tie into it at a key point: when resources must be allocated to strategies.

Many organizations deal with this resource allocation question by employing a contingency or supplemental budget approach, rather than assuming that dollars must be allocated to strategies only when the mainline budget decisions are made. The approach taken will differ with particular contexts, but the general rule to avoid attempting to tie the community-wide, cross cutting strategic issue management process too closely into either the county or PIC budget processes is likely to prove reliable.

Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

Exhibit
The Strategic Issue Management Process

1. LEO COMMITMENT

Initiating and Supporting the Commitment Process
Understanding the Employment and Training Environment
Understanding Strategic Issue Management
Assessing Costs and Benefits
Defining the LEO-PIC Partnership
Formulating a Partnership Strategy

2. DETAILED DESIGN

Formulating the PIC Vision
Determining Partnership Outcomes
Developing the Workplan

3. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Preparing the Environmental Scan
Holding the Issue Identification Work Session

4. ISSUE SELECTION

Assessing Costs and Benefits
Creating the Short List

5. STRATEGY FORMULATION

Naming and Preparing Task Forces
Identifying Sub-Issues
Setting Targets
Developing Implementation Plans

6. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Naming Strategy Managers
Defining Structure and Process
Actively Involving LEOs

Strengthening the Leadership Role of Local Elected Officials in Job Training Programs

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